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**Sierra Club Calls on Department of Natural Resources to Engage Public in Decision on Shipping Jordan Aquifer Water Out of the State**

The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club is calling on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to hold stakeholder meetings and public comment sessions about Pattison Sand’s request for withdrawing water from the Jordan Aquifer and shipping the water to western states.

Pattison Sand is asking the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Department of Natural Resources for a permit to build a well that would allow them to withdraw hundreds of millions of gallons of water a year, load it into rail cars, and ship it to Colorado, Nevada, and other locations.

The Sierra Club is calling on the Department of Natural Resources to conduct a scientific study of the effects this will have on Iowa farmers and on those communities who are using the Jordan Aquifer for drinking water. Already businesses and municipalities in Linn County, Johnson County, and Webster County face restrictions on water withdrawal from the aquifer. The level of the aquifer in those counties has dropped and steps have been implemented to ensure that future needs can be met. The DNR should engage the State Geologist in this study.

The documents submitted to the DNR show that the legality of this scheme is questionable. Pattison apparently recognizes this fact since they are requesting numerous variances from the legal requirements.

Sierra Club is especially concerned that Pattison Sand is directing its proposal to the Governor’s office. In this time when the Governor is exercising emergency powers, we do not believe it is appropriate for the Governor to grant this permit since this has absolutely nothing to do with COVID-19 which is the basis of the Governor’s emergency powers. Sierra Club is deeply concerned that the decision to grant a permit will be based on political considerations and not on science and the law.

This water withdrawal can have long-lasting effects on Iowans, Iowa-based business, and Iowa farms. The request to pump large quantities of water from a major water source and shipping the water out of state would financially benefit Pattison at the expense of all other Iowans.

Furthermore, Pattison is planning to work with the Lieutenant Governor to develop a plan to get his permit. This clearly seems to be an effort to put political pressure on the DNR. Pattison is attempting to justify getting the permit by stating that “we have saved the state and others millions by providing a better quality rock at a more competitive price”. That should not be the basis for granting a water withdrawal permit.

Given the magnitude of this request and its potential effect on all Iowans, we call on the Department of Natural Resources to do a thorough review of the permit, conduct a scientific review of the request, and analyze the effects on all Iowans. This is not an issue of the number of jobs that Pattison can create for its company. Nor is it an issue of how much profit Pattison stands to make. It is a question of the long-term health of the aquifer and the long-term ability of Iowan’s to utilize the aquifer.